

Education and Training Action Plan for Safeguarding Animal Agriculture under the Veterinary Accreditation Program (Updated 6/21/04)

Issue Group: VETERINARY ACCREDITATION

Specific Activity Area Being Addressed: Education and Training for the Veterinary Accreditation program

Recommendations Covered:

#69 Direct APHIS to revise and implement a private veterinarian accreditation program with sufficient funding to be free of user fees and to establish foreign animal disease (FAD) continuing education as a requirement of the program.

#101 Strengthen the federal system of accreditation for veterinarians with more stringent qualifications, including a requirement for (funded) continuing education in foreign animal diseases, and reporting and use of international animal health information.

#145 Redesign and upgrade the national veterinary accreditation program to include

- standardized national training and reinstatement of the exam
- mandatory training to maintain accreditation

#146 Continue development of 2 levels of accreditation: Large Animal and non-large animal...with continuing education for the large animal classification.

Issue Group Findings: Changes had been proposed for the Veterinary Accreditation Program prior to the Safeguarding initiative. Much of the focus for these initiatives and those in the Safeguarding recommendations has an impact on Education and Training. Since the formation of the Veterinary Accreditation Issues Group, some changes have already occurred in the National Program

A number of tasks have been accomplished since the Safeguarding initiative began. These include revision of the core orientation to include a PowerPoint-type electronic program uniform to all states. This program has been distributed to all Area Offices for incorporation into the veterinary accreditation training program.

The VS Professional Development Staff (PDS) and the National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) Staff have produced a list of tasks and objectives for each of the 2 categories of accredited veterinarian in the revised program. These are based on input from 2 regional focus groups and other agency interactions. The proposed regulatory change has been drafted that designates a two-tier system for Categories 1 and 2 accredited veterinarians and for continuing education for the Program.

Another accomplishment is the development of web-based continuing education modules that are undergoing review and testing. The topics covered by the modules fall under comprehensive foreign animal disease training and include disease reporting, biosecurity, and personal protective equipment. A special study has been completed under Homeland Security funding that examined the curricula of veterinary colleges relative to veterinary

accreditation issues. Special attention was devoted to recognition and reporting of foreign animal diseases. Briefings on the preliminary findings of this study have been made at Headquarters and to the Veterinary Accreditation Safeguarding Group. The final report will provide information to VS regarding its interactions with veterinary colleges relative to the Veterinary Accreditation Program and specifically as regards foreign animal disease education.

Proposed changes for the Veterinary Accreditation System include a renewal process requiring continuing education, with both mandatory and elective topics being proposed. Foreign animal disease training will be a top priority. Educational materials for identification and response to foreign animal diseases are to be provided to schools of veterinary medicine to present to their veterinary students. Those educational materials to be provided through the Veterinary Accreditation Program will be unique to other training aids in that they will contain information that includes the roles of, and expectations for, accredited veterinarians in their state. Educational materials will emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious or unusual animal diseases or violations of animal health regulations to a Federal or State official. This message should be present in all educational materials prepared for the accredited veterinarian.

Supplemental training will be provided for veterinarians who wish to enter into an agreement with Veterinary Services in a specialty area under a certification program. This training will bestow special authority for that practitioner to perform inspections and evaluations for Program diseases and to participate in surveillance and emergency response activities.

Proposed Actions: Based on the Veterinary Accreditation Issue Group findings, activities were identified that required attention and resources. Other useful information was gleaned from meetings of two focus groups, consisting of Federal and State representatives having experience with the Veterinary Accreditation Program. Much of the input of these Groups was devoted to education and training, including topics to be covered in the updated Manual for Accredited Veterinarians, the content of the Core presentations, and the tasks of the Accredited Veterinarian to be covered in the veterinary school curriculum. The following actions are proposed:

- Continue working on improvements in the Veterinary Accreditation Program through interactions with Professional Development and National Program Staffs, Area Office representatives, State Departments of Agriculture, American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges, American Veterinary Medical Association, and accredited veterinarians. Improvements may involve application and evaluation forms, periodic review of the core orientation program and the Reference Guide for Practitioners, and provision of quality continuing education materials.
- Develop a standard of quality for training modules and training events and establish a review group to see that standards are met. [The Safeguarding Issues Group could serve as review team until the review group is appointed and functioning.]

- Continue to support the development of web-based training. Direct those continuing education topics not appropriate for web-based training into alternative means. Also address continuing education alternatives for individuals who are unable to participate in computer-source training.
- Assure that personnel and fiscal resources are available including appropriate individuals from Veterinary Services staff to oversee quality and relevancy of training modules and materials.
- In all training materials, include themes of “who to call when you have questions and the importance of integrity when performing accreditation activities.” There must be repetitive reminders of the responsibilities of the accredited veterinarian and the importance of their tasks to our Safeguarding mission and to the international standing of U.S. animal agriculture.
- Obtain input from accredited veterinarians through evaluation forms and other surveys associated with continuing education for the Program. Partner with other sources performing surveys for feed back on the accreditation program. Develop evaluation forms for the core orientation. Include accredited veterinarians in review groups and provide travel expenses for their participation.
- Continue to allow flexibility in the core orientation to provide time for Areas to address applications of the Program unique to their particular animal populations and industries.
- Provide State Veterinarians with the option of adding state-specific information to the continuing education modules on the Federal web-based system at State expense.
- Work with veterinary colleges to assure that Tasks are covered in the veterinary college curriculum.
- Continue to develop continuing education modules including topics that were proposed by focus groups, such as ethics of the accredited veterinarian and compliance issues when ethics are violated, tuberculosis testing, submission of specimens to laboratories and chain of custody, biosecurity and personal protective equipment, and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.
- Continue to review and propose accreditation specialties. Topics already proposed include: emergency response, trichina certification, scrapie specialization, and Johnes specialization. VS Program representatives should assist in preparation of these modules to assure that Program needs are met.
- Disseminate information using multiple routes to ensure that all veterinarians are fully informed and that they have had opportunities to ask questions and adjust to changes in the accreditation program.

Implementation Plans:

Tasks recommended by the Veterinary Accreditation Safeguarding Group –

- By August 1, 2004, develop and implement a communication and marketing plan to provide widespread dissemination of new information on accreditation and to encourage acceptance of changes in the accreditation program. The NVAP will partner with Legislative and

Public Affairs (LPA) in developing materials and recommendations for instituting the plan.

- Starting immediately, PDS will include the cost of production of educational materials for the Veterinary Accreditation Program in their 5 year budget scheme.
- By August 1 2004, a review group will have been formed from VS veterinarians from Area, Regional and Headquarters staffs; the Veterinary Accreditation safeguarding educational issues group leader, and accredited veterinarians. This review group will work with PDS in developing quality standards for veterinary accreditation educational materials and in reviewing that material under production.
- By August 1, 2004, the VS Professional Development Staff and the National Veterinary Accreditation Program Staff will complete the accreditation application materials and core evaluation form and submit them to the Review Group for evaluation.
- By August 1, 2004, the new electronic core orientation program and the Veterinary Accreditation Reference Guide for Practitioners will have been through the Program review process and ready for incorporation into the veterinary accreditation training program at the Area Level.
- By October 1, 2004, alternative educational methods will be developed for veterinarians unable to participate in computer-source training. This will be launched at the same time as the web-based continuing education program becomes available. PDS will oversee the annual production of these programs, adding new topics as needs or interests arise.
- To ensure that Area Offices have the skills and abilities to teach veterinary students and to provide Area Offices with opportunities to share their successes, PDS, through the Regional Offices, will conduct training sessions in presentation skills and in “Tasks” education. This should be done biennially starting in FY 05.
- To address the broad topic of the education of the veterinary student toward fulfillment of the requirements of the Veterinary Accreditation Program, VS will form relationships with the colleges of veterinary medicine by –
 - Requesting that a senior position in Veterinary Services address the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) at its next meeting on partnering with VS to fully take advantage of the resources of the Veterinary Accreditation Program. The presentation should include publicizing the foreign animal disease course for professors at the Plum Island Animal Diagnostic Center and providing information on other VS resources of value in the veterinary education.
 - Providing a liaison to each college of veterinary medicine from its Area Office that would cooperate with the college in providing the education necessary for veterinary students to perform the skills required on the “Tasks” list of the application form.

- Requesting that the college provide an educator to represent the school in interactions over the Veterinary Accreditation Program with the Area Office liaison.
- By October 1, 2004, a special study of veterinary colleges' education in recognition of foreign animal diseases and their reporting procedure will be completed. The grant proposal states that the veterinarian conducting the study will work with local AVICs and State Veterinarians to review the status of the colleges through site visits and interviews. The final report of this study will be used by VS as a guide for development of additional educational materials and for more rewarding interactions between VS and the colleges.
- By October 1, 2005, develop an outcome assessment for evaluation of the NVAP. A national report, by state, will be prepared annually. This report will be based on veterinarians' evaluations of the accreditation core orientation and continuing education courses, records of violations of regulations applicable to accredited veterinarians, other surveys, e.g. Regional Import/Export service evaluations. The report will include outreach activities performed by Area Office VMOs, the number of Accredited Veterinarians completing specialty educational programs, etc. Programs will be evaluated by NVAP Coordinator with input from the VS Management team and Regional Offices. Any needs for changes and additions to the Area or National education and training program will be determined and addressed through assistance of Professional Development and National Program Staffs.
- Annually the core orientation program and the Reference Guide for Practitioners will be examined and updated if necessary. Information from evaluation forms and new information regarding VS Programs and the national animal health status can be used to update the material. PDS will be responsible for continuing to provide educational modules relevant to the Veterinary Accreditation Program.
- Starting in January 2008, VS, through an independent contractor, will assess the status of the quality of education associated with fulfillment of Veterinary Accreditation Program requirements. This will include the education provided through VS and through each college of veterinary medicine. Each college will receive a copy of the report with recommendations. Long term VS planning will include the necessary funding.

Accountable Individual/Group - National Veterinary Accreditation Program Staff, Professional Development Staff, VS Regional Offices

Other Key Players – VS Area Offices, Safeguarding Issues Group, Colleges of Veterinary Medicine, American Veterinary Medical Association

Resources needed – (See attached estimates on 8-75.) Adequate budget for production of manuals, training modules, and other educational materials. Resources for contract for Program evaluation at government and university levels

Statutory/Regulatory Impacts –

- Tasks to be covered must be included in CFR.
- Regulatory changes will include requirements for continuing education and specialty training

Political Sensitivities - Because the proposed changes are significant, there may be individuals who provide negative feedback about the new program. It is important that information be provided now using several routes to assure that all veterinarians are fully informed and have had an opportunity to ask questions. Legislative and Public Affairs will assist with recommendations and materials to help assure that this information is disseminated. Veterinary colleges may be required to incorporate additional teaching material into an already burdened curriculum, requiring necessary adjustments.

Sequencing – Veterinary colleges must be well informed immediately regarding their role in the expected Program improvements. Liaisons must be formed to start developing goals toward necessary changes. Sequencing plans for continuing education are required to help meet the numbers required by the first Veterinary Accreditation renewal period, anticipated to be May 2007. Resources must be developed for evaluating the Program, to include applicant evaluation forms as well as internal and external evaluation protocols to assess the quality of the Program from the perspectives of the Area Offices and the veterinary colleges

Partnering/Cooperation/Communication : The success of changes in the Veterinary Accreditation Program depends upon close cooperation and communication with State departments of agriculture, colleges of veterinary medicine, the American Veterinary Medical Association, and the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges.

Expected Outcome and Performance Indicators:

- Core Programs will be uniform across states. This must be monitored and evaluated by Program staff.
- Quality training materials are specifically directed at and linked to the Standards of the Accredited Veterinarian. Training materials produced for the Program must pass a review process. A Review Team selected from volunteers of State and Federal animal health agencies and also including the Safeguarding Teams' educational issues group leader and accredited veterinarians will work with PDS in developing quality standards for veterinary accreditation educational materials and in reviewing that material under production.
- Information in training materials is up to date. This will require that materials and modules are screened regularly. Feedback from Area Offices, Program Staff, and others will indicate when information in training material lacks relevancy or is inaccurate or outdated.
- Veterinary graduates are more knowledgeable about the Tasks of the Accredited Veterinarian. This can be assessed through participation of VMOs from Area Offices in "Tasks" education at the veterinary college and feedback from veterinarians filling out the application form and checking the "Tasks."
- Accredited veterinarians are more ready to report suspect foreign or new animal diseases. This will be reflected in increasing numbers of foreign animal disease

investigations conducted by our foreign animal disease diagnosticians and greater participation in practitioners in emergency planning exercises at the State level.

- There are fewer compliance issues because of the continuing education requirement. This data is available through the VAS data base.
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Linkages to the Strategic Plan:

Objective 1.3. Improves readiness to respond to disease incursions

- New Program's requirements for continuing education and emphasis on foreign animal disease training, reporting and response
- Development of response team of accredited veterinarians through voluntary specialty education

Objective 2.1. Rapidly detects foreign and emerging animal diseases including those with public health/food safety implications

- Core education emphasizes response to foreign and emerging diseases
- Program provides educational resources in recognition of foreign and newly emerging animal diseases and for diagnosis and control of animal diseases with a zoonotic potential

Objective 2.4. Increases and improves capabilities to identify and trace animal diseases nationwide

- Training materials will include information on animal identification and how to determine the origin of an animal disease through use of the identification system

Objective 3.1. Responds effectively to adverse animal health events and continues to improve the national animal health response capabilities

- Resources provided for training necessary for certification as a national emergency response veterinarian.

Objective 3.4 Reduce the incidence and spread of serious animal diseases including those with public health/food safety implications

- Program will encourage participation in State-level emerging response and provide training materials on protocols

Objective 4.1 Improve market access and promote timely and efficient certification for exports of animals, animal products, and veterinary biologics.

- Training modules can be developed for veterinarians specifically applicable to what the accredited veterinarian must know about animal export.